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ABSTRACT

This study examined the difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers. The sample included 9th- through 12th-grade students who attended a rural southwest Florida high school during the fall semester of the 1989-90 school year. Subjects completed an opinionnaire three times, once for each of three of their teachers (2,038 opinionnaires were sent to the school and 1,197 usable responses were returned). The student's letter grade and number grade were placed on the opinionnaires by a selected teacher. Each opinionnaire was evaluated to obtain a teacher's overall leniency/strictness score. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers, with students who scored their teachers as being strict receiving higher grades. Copies of the opinionnaire forms are appended. (Author/JD)

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Teacher Leniency/Strictness and Students' Grades

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Running Head: TEACHER LENIENCY/STRICTNESS AND GRADES

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Abstract

This study examined the difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers. The sample included 9th through 12th grade students who attended a rural Southwest Florida high school during the fall semester of the 1989-90 school year. Subjects completed an opinionnaire three times, once for each of three of their teachers. A total of 1197 usable opinionnaires were returned. The student's letter grade and number grade was placed on the opinionnaire by a selected teacher. Each opinionnaire was evaluated to obtain a teacher's overall leniency/strictness score. Using these teachers' scores as the independent variable, and the letter grades and number grades as the dependent variable, a multiple regression analysis of variance was conducted. Using both the letter grades ($F = 16.100$, $p = .0001$) and the number grades ($F = 19.9284$, $p = .0000$), the results indicated, at the 99% confidence interval ($\alpha = .01$), that there is a significant difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers with students who scored their teachers as being strict receiving higher grades.

Teacher Leniency/Strictness and Students' Grades

All teachers have many different characteristics which make the teacher what he is. One characteristic that children like to see in a teacher is good classroom control.

> Children want consistency, fairness, and adequate classroom control from the teacher [otherwise known as strictness]. In general, a child who lacks confidence in his self-control feels better if he thin' he will not be permitted to get away with anyt[illegible]. He wants the feeling of strength, dependability and fairness in his teacher. (Swanson & Jenkins, 1969, p. 6)

Gagné gives nine teacher characteristics related to the strictness of a teacher:

> (1) gaining and controlling the learner's attention; (2) informing the learner about intended outcomes; (3) stimulating the learner to recall capabilities already achieved that are prerequisite to the new learning; (4) presenting the learning stimuli; (5) guiding the process of learning; (6) supplying feedback; (7) assessing performance; (8) making provision for transfer of learning to new situations; and (9) taking steps

to assure retention. (cited in Doyle, 1983, p. 28)

Communication skills are also a very big part of a teacher's characteristics. According to Aspy and Roebuck (1977), good communication skills give higher attendance, greater achievement, and far fewer discipline problems than poor communication skills. These communication skills are directly related to managing the classroom in an effective method.

Whether strict or lenient, teachers care, in varying degrees, how much their students are achieving. There are many ways to measure this achievement. One way is to use some type of a grading system. "Teacher-assigned classroom grades are a traditional and nearly universal means of documenting student achievement in American Schools" (Wiese, 1988, p. 10). However, the grades students receive may reflect more than achievement. Grades may reflect certain teacher characteristics such as strictness or leniency. The purpose of this study was to find out if there is a significant difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers.

This study was based on four assumptions. All the students in the sample (a) were able to read and understand the meaning of each statement that was on the opinionnaire (see Appendix A), (b) were able to answer the opinionnaire honestly, (c) were given adequate time to read and mark their response to each statement, and (d) were given grades by the same grading scale.

A lenient teacher, as defined operationally, was a teacher who received an overall leniency/strictness score of 3.35 or below from a student of that teacher on the opinionnaire (see Appendix A). A strict teacher was a teacher who received an overall leniency/strictness score of 6.65 or higher from a student of that teacher on the opinionnaire (see Appendix A). The overall leniency/strictness score was calculated by the following process:

1. Count all the checks in the **ALWAYS** column and multiply this number by 10.

2. Count all the checks in the **MOST OF THE TIME** column and multiply this number by 6.65.

3. Count all the checks in the **SOMETIMES** column and multiply this number by 3.35.

4. Add the numbers found from steps 1, 2, and 3 and divide by 10. This final number is the teacher's overall leniency/strictness score from that student.

Method

The subjects of this study were 9th through 12th grade students who attended a rural Southwest Florida high school during the fall semester of the 1989-90 school year. Each student filled out one opinionnaire for three different teachers of the student's choice for a total of three opinionnaires.

There were 2038 opinionnaires sent to the school with 1402 of them being returned. Because of missing data--letter grade, number grade, or statements being rated--there were 1197 usable opinionnaires returned. In the event that a student did not tell what grade level he was in, he was assigned a grade level of 13. In the event a student did not tell what period he was filling the opinionnaire out for, that opinionnaire received a period number of 0 (zero).

There were 108 opinionnaires filled out by ninth graders, 337 opinionnaires filled out by tenth graders, 365 opinionnaires filled out by eleventh graders, 276 opinionnaires filled out by twelfth graders, and 111 opinionnaires were assigned a grade level of thirteen.

There were 27 opinionnaires receiving a period number of 0 (zero), 183 opinionnaires filled out for period one classes, 189 for period two, 189 for period three, 174 for period four, 176 for period five, 136 for period six, and 123 opinionnaires for period seven classes.

There were 549 opinionnaires filled out for male teachers and 648 opinionnaires filled out for female teachers.

Description of the Instrument

The opinionnaire (see Appendix A) used for the main study in Southwest Florida was written to show how strict or lenient a student thought a teacher was. Each student was to answer ten separate questions according to how he or she thought that teacher conducted the class. A place was provided for the grade that student received in the class. Both the letter grade and the number grade were placed on the opinionnaire.

A pre-study was conducted to validate the opinionnaire that was used in the study. The pre-study was conducted at a rural Central Arkansas high school during the fall of the school year 1989-90. The students involved in this pre-study were in a geometry

class when they filled out the opinionnaire. This pre-study consisted of two parts. First, students filled out separate opinionnaires (see Appendix B) for three of their teachers. This opinionnaire was slightly different than the one used in Southwest Florida, although the questions were identical. Second, five weeks later, the same group of students filled out a rating opinionnaire (see Appendix C) which had a list of teachers' names. This list of names came from the first set of opinionnaires.

These two opinionnaires, the opinionnaire and the rating opinionnaire, were compared using Spearman rank order coefficient of correlation to show that the questions asked could indicate that a teacher was lenient or strict depending on the thoughts of the student. In figuring the correlation coefficient ρ (rho), only the teachers who were rated by ten or more students were used. Ten of the twelve original teachers were used to find the final results of the pre-study. The result of using Spearman rank order coefficient of correlation found $\rho = .3818$. This result showed that the questions asked on the opinionnaire indicates a teacher is lenient or strict depending on the thoughts of each student.

Results

The teacher's overall leniency/strictness score for each opinionnaire was found by the process previously mentioned. Using these teachers' scores as the independent variable, and the letter grade that went with each opinionnaire as the dependent variable, a multiple regression analysis of variance was conducted. The letter grades were changed to numbers for the use of this test--$A = 4$, $B = 3$, $C = 2$, $D = 1$, and $F = 0$. The analysis of variance resulted in $F = 16.100$ [$\rho(.0001) < \alpha(.01)$]. This shows there is a difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers.

Using the teacher's scores as the independent variable, and the number grade (average percent) that went with each opinionnaire as the dependent variable, a multiple regression analysis of variance was conducted. The analysis of variance resulted in $F = 19.9284$ [$\rho(.0000) < \alpha(.01)$]. This shows there is a difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers.

The results also indicated that students who scored their teachers as being strict received higher grades. Accordingly, students who scored their teachers as being lenient received lower grades.

Discussion

These results indicate that there is a significant difference between the grades of students with lenient teachers and the grades of students with strict teachers. It was found that the students that scored their teachers as being strict received higher grades, and the students that scored their teachers lenient received lower grades.

There are many more areas that might be affected by the strictness of teachers. These areas may be explored more by sorting through the data received. More useful information could be gathered by conducting another study using the same opinionnaire but distributed to different schools.

Since the opinionnaires were equally distributed between the four grades, the seven class periods, and were filled out equally for male teachers and female teachers, this study may be generalized to other schools similar to the sample school.

APPENDIX A

DO NOT MARK IN THIS BOX	
LETTER GRADE	
NUMBER GRADE	
TS	

OPINIONNAIRE

NAME _____ GRADE 9th 10th 11th 12th (CIRCLE ONE)

TEACHER'S NAME MR. MRS. MISS (CIRCLE ONE) _____ PERIOD _____

FOLD AND TEAR AT THE DOTTED LINE BEFORE TURNING IN

FOLD AND TEAR AT THE DOTTED LINE BEFORE TURNING IN

Directions: Mark one column for each of the following statements.

Mark column **A** if the statement **NEVER** happens.
Mark column **B** if the statement **SOMETIMES** happens.
Mark column **C** if the statement happens **MOST OF THE TIME.**
Mark column **D** if the statement **ALWAYS** happens.

		A	B	C	D
1)	My teacher lets me know if I am behaving wrong.				
2)	My teacher does things to keep students well-behaved.				
3)	My teacher uses the whole class period for teaching and learning activities.				
4)	My teacher conducts class with consistency.				
5)	My teacher starts class within three minutes after the bell rings.				
6)	My teacher gives tests at the time scheduled for the test.				
7)	My teacher takes up homework when homework is due.				
8)	My teacher keeps the class quiet and in order.				
9)	My teacher has a consistent grading system.				
10)	My teacher does what he/she promises to do.				

APPENDIX B

Opinionnaire

Teacher's name _____

Directions: Mark one column for each of the following statements.

Mark column **A** if the statement **NEVER** happens.
Mark column **B** if the statement **SOMETIMES** happens.
Mark column **C** if the statement happens **MOST OF THE TIME.**
Mark column **D** if the statement **ALWAYS** happens.

		A	B	C	D
1)	My teacher lets me know if I am behaving wrong.				
2)	My teacher does things to keep students well-behaved.				
3)	My teacher uses the whole class period for teaching and learning activities.				
4)	My teacher conducts class with consistency.				
5)	My teacher starts class within three minutes after the bell rings.				
6)	My teacher gives tests at the time scheduled for the test.				
7)	My teacher takes up homework when homework is due.				
8)	My teacher keeps the class quiet and in order.				
9)	My teacher has a consistent grading system.				
10)	My teacher does what he/she promises to do.				

If you have a problem understanding any statement please write the number(s) of the statement(s) here.

If you have any comments or suggestions please write them on the back, **THANK - YOU.**

APPENDIX C

RATING OPINIONNAIRE

Rate the teachers in order of how strict you think they are. Place a one (1) in the blank beside the teacher's name that you think is the most strict teacher that you have. Place a two (2) in the blank beside the teacher's name that you think is the next strict teacher that you have. Continue until you have rated all the teachers that you have that are on this list. Do not rate any teacher that you do not have. You do not have to put a number beside all the names.

*Teacher 1 _____

*Teacher 2 _____

*Teacher 3 _____

*Teacher 4 _____

*Teacher 5 _____

*Teacher 6 _____

*Teacher 7 _____

*Teacher 8 _____

*Teacher 9 _____

*Teacher 10 _____

*Teacher 11 _____

*Teacher 12 _____

*Actual teacher names have been deleted to preserve confidentiality.

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